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IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 22 JULY 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you that, at 1900 hours on 12 July 1996, when the Iraqi tug Taj al-Ma'arik, operating in the ports of Iraq, was anchored south of the Iraqi port of Bakr, a frigate in the north of the Arabian Gulf communicated with the Iraqi tug requesting it not to move. At the same time, a helicopter flew over the tug. At 0615 hours on 13 July 1996, a rubber boat with 10 armed persons of Australian nationality on board approached the Iraqi tug; eight of them boarded the tug and questioned the master of the vessel concerning the nature of its activities, its tonnage, the number of its crew members and its area of operations, and then searched the entire vessel, including the engine room. Although they had alleged that the tug was carrying weapons, they found nothing on board. At 0715 hours on the same day, the persons from the boat left the tug.

At the same time, the Australian frigate 5-Melbourne sent another rubber boat, carrying six armed persons of Australian nationality, to the Iraqi fishing vessel Zubeida, which was anchored close to the tug Taj al-Ma'arik. They searched the fishing vessel and left it, having found nothing on board.

I should be grateful if you would call on the Australian Government not to repeat these hostile, provocative and unjustified acts directed against Iraqi civilian vessels. Such acts are serious infringements of the Charter of the United Nations and of the provisions of international law and create tension and instability in this part of the region, instead of establishing a state of security.

I also affirm the legally established right of the Republic of Iraq to compensation for the damage inflicted on it by such acts, in accordance with the principles of State responsibility.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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